

A Final Word

Stay Focused on Operations, Efficiency & Environmental Responsibility

Welcome to the summer 2007 issue of *Currents*. In mid-May I received word that I will soon depart the Chief of Naval Operations Environmental Readiness Division (OPNAV N45) to take over as Commander, Navy Region Northwest, so this may be my final Outlook column. I'd like to use this forum to reflect on the progress we've made over the past year and a half, offer my impressions of where the Navy's environmental programs may be headed in the future, and share some personal insights about the job and the community of dedicated professionals I've had the privilege to work with in this position.

As the global war on terror continues to take a toll on the Navy's funding, equipment and infrastructure, we have a responsibility to the men and women on the front lines to make sure we're operating as efficiently as possible. As part of meeting that responsibility, we have begun applying a Lean Six Sigma approach to the Navy's environmental programs. Beginning in October 2006, we identified potential areas for improvement, and we now have several projects underway. Beyond Lean Six Sigma, we have conferred with the Navy Secretariat on the need to develop a long-term strategy for environmental programs across the Department of the Navy. In time, I believe these initiatives will bear fruit: more mileage from every dollar spent on the environment, and better support of the warfighter.

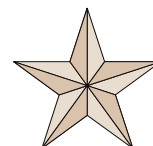
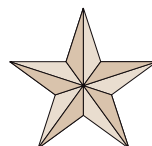
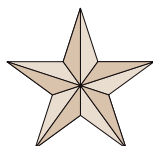
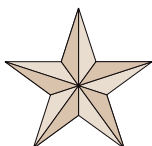
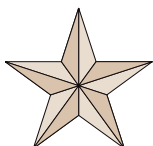
Another of the many areas in which we're making steady, measurable progress is the Installation Restoration Program. We are still on track to have cleanups complete or remedies in place for all Department of Navy installation restoration sites by 2014. The Navy has been very effective in settling claims against non-government parties who contributed to contamination on Department of Navy property, and in

handling cases where we've faced cleanup of contamination from non-Navy activities. These efforts have brought funding back to the program and made it available for restoration projects.

The Navy's Munitions Response Program and the Range Sustainment Environmental Program Assessment process are also well underway. Our preliminary assessments for munitions response sites should be 99 percent complete by the end of this year, and range assessments for Major Range and Test Facility Base ranges are scheduled to be done in fiscal year 2008. By the year 2010, site inspections for all Department of Navy munitions response sites should be complete.

A huge milestone has been the completion of the FY 2000–2006 Pollution Prevention Afloat Program. Suites of the latest pollution prevention equipment have now been installed on approximately 180 surface ships, enabling these vessels to conduct their day-to-day missions with the minimum practicable impact on the environment.

To ensure protection of human health and the environment for major U.S. Navy activities in foreign nations, we developed and promulgated a new Overseas Environmental Baseline Guidance Document (OEBGD). The guidance outlines procedures for developing environmental compliance standards, considering international agreements, host nation standards, and U.S. law. The OEBGD encourages overseas installations to pursue pollution prevention approaches to compliance, including commercial technology when available and innovative solutions when needed, as long as they are economically viable and consistent with mission requirements.



As I mentioned in my previous Outlook column, N45 is presently leading a North Atlantic Treaty Organization study on ballast water and sediments management. A Virtual Team of Experts is working to determine the potential impacts of the Ballast Water Management Convention on international naval forces and seek mechanisms to meet those standards. This multilateral initiative lets us share expertise on this issue among our sister navies, and should eventually create a consistent approach from which we'll all benefit.

training areas at sea. Developing those planning documents is our most visible and challenging effort right now. We are forging ahead with Environmental Impact Statements and permit applications that will go a long way toward solving the compliance challenges associated with mid-frequency active sonar training. Through continued coordination with NMFS, we now have a plan to bring all of those training areas into full compliance by the end of 2009.

My advice is to continue advancing all these causes, and to do so by grounding all our compliance actions in science.

To obtain much-needed scientific data on marine mammals, the Navy increased annual funding for marine mammal research for fiscal year 2007. With a combination of Congressional plus-ups totaling \$2 million and an additional \$2 million allocated by the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Fleet Readiness and Logistics, available funding for the research has increased from approximately \$10 million to \$14 million. This has made it possible to move ahead smartly on several projects, including marine mammal monitoring through existing sensors on instrumented ranges, exploration of leading edge detection technologies such as undersea gliders and marine radars, and a marine mammal behavioral response study (BRS) being led by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) at the Atlantic Undersea Test and Evaluation Center in the Bahamas. The technologies may make it possible to locate and avoid marine mammals more effectively than ever before, and it is our hope that the BRS will yield clear, accurate data about beaked whale hearing and behavior that can be incorporated into our environmental planning documents.

Invocation of the National Defense Exemption (NDE) by the Secretary of Defense was a crucial step in our compliance strategy. It became clear in working with NMFS that the NDE was the only path available for the Navy to comply with the Marine Mammal Protection Act for our individual exercises while we complete the long term environmental planning that will ultimately cover all our

We continue to hone our procedures and field advancing technologies to ensure our ongoing compliance with environmental laws on our ships and installations. We are revising and making more efficient our procedures for inspecting and certifying all the sites that conduct gamma and X-ray radiography throughout the enterprise.

In the big scheme of Navy environmental planning and execution, I've done a touch and go here at N45. It has been a fast and furious 18 months, and I have learned a great deal. I leave very impressed with the people we have working all the various issues, and confident in the Navy's commitment and ability to do the right things by the environment while fulfilling our responsibility to defend the country.

My advice is to continue advancing all these causes, and to do so by grounding all our compliance actions in science. We are committed to complying with all environmental statutes. However, in our daily operations Sailors' and Marines' lives are at stake, as well as the very security of the country, and we can't afford to live in the realm of the precautionary principle when it comes to unknown effects on the environment.

Press on, and know that our operational competence depends on the underpinnings of environmental compliance you are providing. ⚓

Rear Admiral James A. Symonds
Director, Environmental Readiness Division

